



April 28, 2025

The honorable Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee, my name is David Trahan, I am the Executive Director of Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, Institute for Legislative Action, testifying neither for-nor-against L.D. 1441, *Resolve to Establish the Commission to Study the Future of Recreational Access in Maine*.

Although the SAM-ILA strongly supports Maine's landowners, we have concerns with L.D. 1441. Recently, we introduced a similar bill, L.D. 1308, directing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Establish a Working Group to Explore Opportunities to Maintain Public Access of Land, which was far less specific in its language and simply brought user groups together with landowners to look for common ground. I was shocked to see the negative response from landowner groups.

In retrospect, this reaction is likely to represent a growing mistrust between landowners and land users. Likely the fallout of controversial political issues like, Sunday hunting, growing pressures from legislative energy policies like, carbon credits, declining logging markets, gated roads, pressures to expand the National Monument, the use of exclusive leases to hunt, access to tribal lands for recreational use by non-tribal citizens, the use of drones, trail cameras, oversized ATV's, tree stands on private property, and the list goes on.

The scars inflicted fighting these issues cannot heal in a study of any sort. It is why we chose to be less specific in bringing a study group together. We wanted to talk with landowners and determine whether we had common ground to begin rebuilding trust, the most important element in any policy discussion.

A reset in the way recreational users and landowners interact is essential, In the very near future, a new, northern Maine renewable energy corridor will be built into Aroostook County. With it, will come a new set of unique conflicts as industrial, commercial power plants (solar arrays and wind towers) are built on the landscape in some of Maine's last remaining wild areas.

This legislation was partially drafted by supporters of this industrial level energy development with an eye toward supplying renewable energy to other New England states. That concerns us is, this type of development is being driven by some conservation groups. At the same time, they are ignoring the negative

impacts on wildlife habitat, water quality and scenic views. I remind the committee that a 5000-acre solar array is being proposed for Hersey Maine, just north of Patten and northern Maine has the largest unbroken naturally producing Brook Trout habitat left in America. Energy development pressures to benefit other New England states should be of the highest priority for this committee as the department very mission is to protect these resources.

Fighting over these issues is inherently harmful, what is needed is thoughtful, respectful dialogue that protects Maine's natural resources, landowners' rights, respect for our traditions of shared use and a commitment to bringing people to the table that can articulate all those essential elements.

To discuss the policy matters I have identified, we must carefully select committee members and priorities. A good start would be to direct the Department to put the groups in a room, lock the door to begin a dialogue to help clear the air. If a path forward looks feasible, we can come back to you and build legislation from there.

Respectfully,

David Trahan, Executive Director
Sportsman's Alliance of Maine